



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY HEALTH AGENCY

Public Health Department

2191 Johnson Avenue
San Luis Obispo, California 93401
805-781-5500 • FAX 805-781-5543

Jeff Hamm
Health Agency Director

Penny Borenstein, M.D., M.P.H.
Health Officer

PUBLIC HEALTH MEDIA RELEASE

September 20, 2012

CONTACT:

Ann McDowell
Epidemiologist
805 788-2095

WEST NILE VIRUS DETECTED IN BIRDS IN NORTHERN SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

The California Department of Public Health has notified the San Luis Obispo Public Health Department that a bird collected on August 5th in the City of Paso Robles and a bird collected on September 10th in Atascadero have tested positive for West Nile Virus. These birds represent the first confirmation of West Nile Virus activity in north San Luis Obispo County for 2012. The bird detected in Atascadero was a wild turkey, and was a recent infection. The bird collected in Paso Robles was a hawk that had a chronic infection, which indicates unknown time of infection.

West Nile Virus has been detected in 38 other counties in California, with 126 human cases and 6 deaths since the beginning of the year. Throughout the United States, a total of 3,142 human cases have been reported to the CDC, the highest number of cases reported through the third week of September since 2003.

“West Nile Virus activity continues to increase in the State and San Luis Obispo County” said Dr. Penny Borenstein, Health Officer for San Luis Obispo County. “It is important to protect yourself and your family from mosquito bites by eliminating mosquito habitat around your home, avoiding mosquitos, and wearing appropriate clothing with mosquito repellent as necessary”.

West Nile Virus is transmitted to people by the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds and can then transmit the virus to other animals and humans. Approximately 80 percent of people infected with West Nile Virus will not show any symptoms. For those persons who do develop illness, they usually begin experiencing symptoms from 5 to 15 days after they are bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms may include fever, headache, body aches, while a small number may develop severe illness.

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes:

- Many mosquitoes are active in the evening and morning. Avoid spending time outside

if possible at those times of day.

- If you do go outside, be sure to wear long sleeved clothing and apply insect repellent.
- Avoid areas of heavy mosquito activity

To reduce mosquito breeding areas:

- Eliminate standing water on your property
- Keep window and door screens in good repair
- Change water in bird baths and pet dishes (at least weekly)
- Keep children's wading pools empty when not in use

To report dead birds or squirrels, call the California State dead bird helpline at 1-877-968-2473. For more information, go to <http://westnile.ca.gov> or <http://cdc.gov/westnile/>. To fill out an online report of a dead bird or squirrel, go to <http://westnile.ca.gov>.

###